

MEDIASCAN TRANSCRIPT  
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HERMAN: Mr. Counselor Isakov, the United States and the Soviet Union are negotiating disarmament on two levels, the strategic or intercontinental ballistic talks in Geneva and the shorter-range European based missiles as well. In either of these two sets of disarmament talks do you see cause for optimism, for hope, signs of progress towards actual disarmament agreement? ISAKOV: Mr. Herman, I can say that at the present time there is no reason to be optimistic because now we have at the table of negotiations two sets of proposals of the Soviet Union and of the United States, and it seems to us that the proposals which were introduced by the United States at the present time are hard to accept. It's got to negotiate on that basis, but if there is a change, there is a more pronounced desire to achieve results, I mean on the part of the United States, then one can have hope, and I should say that we must have hope because these negotiations are of tremendous importance for both our countries and for the situation in the world in general.

From CBS News, Washington. A spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview on Face the Nation, with Victor Isakov, minister-counsellor of the Soviet Embassy. Minister Isakov will be questioned by CBS News State Department correspondent Bill McLaughlin, by William Beecher, diplomatic correspondent for the Boston Globe, and by the moderator, CBS News correspondent George Herman. Face the Nation is produced by CBS News which is solely responsible for the selection of today's guest and panel.

HERMAN: Mr. Counselor Isakov, let me turn my first question around. You said you see no reason, no signs in the disarmament talks at either level that give you room for optimism. Are you waiting, or are you actually pessimistic that there will be a disarmament agreement between the two countries? ISAKOV: No. We are not just sitting and waiting for something to happen. We, on our part, are waging these negotiations quite actively and trying to carry them in a businesslike fashion, as it should be because obviously nobody expects the United States to disarm unilaterally. Nobody in Moscow, in the Soviet Union expects the United States to forget about its national security and its interest. However, in negotiations it usually should be this way that both sides try to find an acceptable compromise on the basis of equality and equal security when the interests of both sides are taken into consideration, and that is why.... Let us take for example...

HERMAN: But are you pessimistic about that? ISAKOV: No. As I said, at the moment there is no reason to be optimistic, but as I have said already, if we are met at least half way by the United States negotiating team then there is reason to hope that we can find solution in this area because the solution is possible.

BEECHER: Mr. Isakov, as you know, a presidential commission has just recommended that the United States make a basic change in its strategic arms reduction program in Geneva. That is, to switch to emphasis on trying to reduce the number of missile warheads and missile payloads instead of the missiles themselves. Since it is warheads that kill and not missiles, do you think such a switch in the American position would be a good, helpful idea or a bad idea? ISAKOV: Well, it is difficult for me to speculate really, because at the moment it's a hypothetical proposition. When it is on the table of negotiations, the American, all American proposals will be considered in all seriousness. And if the right areas of agreement, if the right

areas, as I said, the interests of security of both countries are taken into consideration, then we'll move forward. So let us wait and see how it will turn out and what will be the proposal by the United States negotiating team.

MCLAUGHLIN: Mr. Isakov, let's move our missiles around a little bit. Vladimir Zigwandi of your central committee has been quoted in the U.S. press as saying that the Soviet Union might deploy nuclear weapons in Nicaragua if the U.S. deploys Cruise missiles in Western Europe. Is that report true? Is there a possibility the Soviet Union might deploy missiles in Nicaragua? ISAKOV: To give you a reply, as far as Mr. Zigwandi's comments, one must have the, at least the text for his remarks because it will be.... You know, sometimes a couple of words may change the whole thing. But as far as I can judge by the reports in the press, he was talking about the possibility of deploying Soviet medium-range missiles in such a fashion that they can reach the territory of the United States and he was not talking about deployment of Soviet missiles in Nicaragua. That is how I understand the remarks. If we can...

HERMAN: Let me ask you something, Mr. Isakov. ISAKOV: Yes, Mr. Herman.

HERMAN: You saw this story in the American newspapers about quoting Mr. Zigwandi? ISAKOV: Yes.

HERMAN: Did the embassy not then send for the text of it, have it on hand so that you would be able to answer such questions? ISAKOV: Well, anyway at the moment, I myself didn't read the exact quotations. However, in this area I may also refer just again only to the press reports, of course, to the remarks made in Nicaragua by the representative who said that there are no proposals with regard to the missile deployment on the part of the Soviet Union. And in addition, the other day I read reports about the impressions of two United States congressmen who just visited Nicaragua and they mentioned that the Nicaragua, that a deal was taken, is an absurd idea.

MCLAUGHLIN: Nevertheless, sir, you did say that a new deployment of intermediate-range missiles might be possible somewhere around the United States if Cruise missiles are deployed in Western Europe. Is that not true? ISAKOV: That is true.

MCLAUGHLIN: Where would you deploy them? ISAKOV: That is true. If you are interested where we put that, I cannot give you a definite reply because it's a technical matter. What is important to remember is that on our part it will be a forced decision because it is very interesting to note the raise of concern in this country when this problem was touched upon a possibility of a reply on the part of the Soviet Union to reach with medium-range missiles the territory of the United States. So why then, there is so lack of understanding of Soviet concern when new types of weapons, Pershing II's and long-range Cruise missiles are intended to be deployed in Europe in the vicinity, in the proximity to the frontiers of the Soviet Union?

MCLAUGHLIN: But you already have, sir, SS-20s deployed in Eastern Europe. ISAKOV: That is true.

MCLAUGHLIN: So wouldn't that action, deploying new missiles around the United States, represent on your part upping the ante in escalation? ISAKOV: No. And I'll tell you why. Because it is very interesting point you raised. Strangely enough, in the report you just referred to, it is said that all components of the strategic forces should be taken into consideration while speaking above the deterrent, meaning ICBM's

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land-based, strategic bombers and submarines with nuclear missiles. But then why, when talking about medium-range means and weapons in Europe, you strangely forgetting and losing somehow the traces of other components of your forces in Europe. Meaning that it's not the forces are composed not only of missiles. There are aircraft, land-based and based on the air carriers, and they're in the area of middle-range weapons. So when we're talking about this area, we are saying that at the present time, taking all components into consideration, not only missiles but all components of middle-range armaments, the Soviet Union and the United States have rough balance in Europe even with nuclear charges in favor of the United States. We have approximately 1,000 delivery means of middle-range type in Europe. So if you introduce now, additional six, about 600 new types of weapons, then the balance will be changed and you will have not only preponderance in nuclear charges, but preponderance in delivery (inaudible) as well.

HERMAN: Mr. Isakov, wouldn't you say that in disarmament negotiations, like in any negotiation, the important thing is not so much the details, it's the basic attitudes of the two parties, whether they want it or not? Now I want to refer you to what Mr. Gromyko said, and I guess Mr. Gromyko is your boss in a way as foreign minister. He said in a news conference on April 2, the president of the United States said that in it's foreign policy the present U.S. administration is guided by lofty moral values and then he said, 'Lofty moral values cannot be defended by a state which is engaged in preparing war, above all a nuclear war.' Is it the Soviet belief that the United States is preparing to wage a war, a nuclear war, against the Soviet Union? I mean is that what, the kind of background thinking on which disarmament talks are proceeding? ISAKOV: Mr. Herman, if the arms race is going on, and we see lack of desire to negotiate, if there is a obvious tendency to get superiority in the military field over the Soviet Union, if the Soviet Union is virtually surrounded by about 1,500 major military installations and bases of the United States, so how should we take that? We take it as a very dangerous situation and if that...

HERMAN: But hasn't the situation remained like that now for almost 20 years, the Soviet Union has been surrounded? Nothing has happened. There have been no American preparations towards actually waging a war. It's very difficult to tell the difference between defense and offense, and I'm trying to figure out what has changed that all of a sudden Mr. Gromyko should say the United States is preparing a war. ISAKOV: A lot of things have changed here since, let's say, the '70s. You must admit that we cannot be satisfied with the status of Soviet-American relations.

HERMAN: Are you saying we've been preparing a war for 13 years without waging it? I don't understand exactly. ISAKOV: I'm trying to say that if there is a tendency to get the upper hand, if there is a tendency for military superiority because the American public opinion is told that the Soviet Union suddenly, in a year or two, suddenly became superior to the United States, if there is that kind of preparation (inaudible) is called, well there is a lot of euphemism these days, there really the margin of safety in plain words means military superiority. So if there is that kind of attitude in military field, in all bilateral relations a lot of agreements which we negotiated were broken by the American side and not resumed, a number of areas where we had negotiations in the disarmament area, I may tell you for example like trilateral..

HERMAN: Mr. Isakov. ISAKOV: Yes. HERMAN: This is your fourth tour of duty here. ISAKOV: Yes.

HERMAN: Do you seriously believe the United States is preparing a nuclear war against Russia? ISAKOV: I do not think that this is the feeling of the American people. I do not think so. Of course, they are not thinking of that way. But you also must agree that if we proceed along the lines of increased confrontation and increased, or rather, try the feeling more, of more of lack of communication then conversely the, it is a dangerous way. It is a dangerous road which it is not our choice for us. We say in private and in public, nuclear war is madness. It is a suicide.

BEECHER: Mr. Isakov, we've been talking very much in generalities here. I wonder if we can try to put something to rest. You did not mean to leave the impression that if there is in fact a counter-deployment of medium-range systems by the Soviet Union in this hemisphere, that it would be in Cuba or Nicaragua, but more likely say on submarines? Is that not the impression that you're trying to leave, or is it? That if there are medium-range missiles that the Soviet Union decides to put in the vicinity of the United States, rather than being deployed on land, as in the case of Cuba or Nicaragua, they more likely would be on submarines off our shores. ISAKOV: Well, as I said before it will be just now irrelevant to speculate what form, in what kind the deployment will take place. I'm just trying to emphasize only one thing, that if there is such a concern so you should understand concern on the Soviet side when in Europe, in West Europe this country is intended to deploy about 600 new types of nuclear weapons which will add to the strategic balance of this country. Because our medium-range missiles, as of now, cannot reach the territory of the United States while yours in Europe will be able to do that. That is why, that is why for us it doesn't make any difference whether it is an ICBM flying from somewhere in the United States for 30 minutes or it is a missile flying from West Germany. And the last one will be even more dangerous because the warning time will be about 5 minutes.

MCLAUGHLIN: Mr. Isakov, if we could move to another part of the world. The Soviet Union has done its best over the past few months to denigrate and even sabotage the Reagan Mideast peace plan through your support of the radical elements in the Arab world and through even not so subtle threats to King Hussein. Well, does the Soviet Union for its part have any plan to help bring peace to the Middle-East? ISAKOV: Well, Mr. McLaughlin, it's unfortunate you are mentioning sabotage because it is the position of the Soviet Union for many, many years, actually from the very beginning of the first conflict between Israel and Arab countries. We have very clear set of proposals which are on the table and they are known world over.

MCLAUGHLIN: What was wrong with the Reagan plan? ISAKOV: I can just tell you what we have in mind. Specifically, because it seems that some people at least, and judging by your question, feel that it is not in the interest of the Soviet Union to have peace and stability in the Middle East. It's visa-versa because we suggest first that the Arab territories occupied by the Israeli forces should be given to their owners, should be freed and liberated. Second, we think that the Palestinian people should be given as, the same right as other people in the world to have their own country including the creation of independent state. Third, we feel that all countries, Arab and Israel in the Middle East, should have an opportunity to live in peace. You will have time to question me. We have plenty of time left. Let me finish please. We feel that Israel and Arab countries should have an opportunity to live together in peace and development. Fourth, we feel that the hostility between Israel and Arab countries should be stopped and peace, a state of peace should be negotiated, and finally, we feel there should be strict international guarantees for stability and peace. For that purpose, we suggest an international conference with the participation of all states and countries concerned. So very brief this is our position of principle.

MCLAUGHLIN: But the people you are closest to in the Middle East, your closet friends, Syria, Libya, the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestines, South Yemin, all these states are dedicated to the destruction of Israel and not to peace. So how does that square with your policy? ISAKOV: You are talking, you are asking about our position of principle. MCLAUGHLIN: I'm questioning your friendliness to the Middle East, who you've picked as friends. ISAKOV: Which is conversly, this is the position we're talking about and trying to convince our friends or other states in the Middle East who are involved in this conflict. This is our position of principle. I emphasize that. So talking to Syria or talking to Yemin government, we are sticking to the same position of principle as far as Arab countries and Israel are concerned.

BEECHER: Mr. Isakov, you have just restated the known position of the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Let's look at a recent decision that your government has made and its implications. You have many effective air defense missiles in your arsenal. Yet you chose to put into Syria the SA-5 missile whose range of 150 miles covers most of the air space of Israel and therefore, could be looked at by them as a strategic threat. Is this an evidence of a willingness in Moscow to take greater risks in the Middle East than it ever has before? ISAKOV: I wouldn't put it in that way. It is a manifestation of our support of security, of our friendly country. I do not see, I never heard even in this country any discussion of a possibility Syria taking Israel. But the talks of a different nature I heard reading your press and listening to your radio and TV. So there is a very simple thing. If Syria is not attacked so there is no problem, there is no reason to be concerned about these types of weapons.

BEECHER: There have been increases in the level of violence on the China-Vietnam border in the last few days, shellings, artillery shellings, some killings on both sides. Is it Soviet information that there is a danger of another war between those countries any time soon? ISAKOV: Well, the results of danger of when conflicts are springing up and appear and developing. It is an unfortunate situation in our view because these two neighboring countries have really no reason to live in tension. They have all reasons to find means of communication and settling their possible disputes. So if it is taken to the table of negotiations, I'm sure there is a possibility to settle the whole thing.

HERMAN: Mr. Isakov, the best American statisticians have been able to do in examining -- you know, our Kremlin watchers, and examining the Soviet Union -- is to find statistics which seem to show that infant mortality has been increasing in the Soviet Union and that life expectancy of adult man has been decreasing. Is there a reason for this? Is there an economic problem? Is there a climate problem? What's been happening? ISAKOV: Well, I do not have any independent information on the subject. I do not have any Soviet statistics to substantiate or to support this assumption because the life, standards of living in the Soviet Union are better and better in comparison with 10, 15, 20 years. We're living better, not worse. So there are more opportunities for that.

HERMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Isakov, for being our guest on Face the Nation.  
ISAKOV: Thank you.

Carol Lamb, Transcriber